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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 007057

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [FR](#) [GG](#) [RS](#) [NATO](#) [EU](#) [KDEM](#) [MARR](#)  
SUBJECT: EUR DAS BRYZA DISCUSSES NEXT STEPS ON  
GEORGIA-RUSSIA, FROZEN CONFLICTS WITH MFA DEPUTY POLITICAL  
DIRECTOR

REF: PARIS 6179

Classified By: PolMC Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Visiting EUR DAS Bryza and EUR/CARC Conflicts Advisor Crosby met with newly arrived MFA Deputy Political Director and A/S-equivalent for non-EU Europe October 24 to exchange views -- in advance of Georgian FM Bezhuashvili's November 7 visit to Paris -- on next steps on Russia-Georgia relations and the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Bryza reviewed U.S. efforts to de-escalate Georgia-Russia tensions in light of U.S. concerns that Russia might be tempted to exploit language in the UNSCR on UNOMIG, and bad blood more generally, to goad the Abkhaz into immediate aggression. Noting that there were signs that the situation was calming somewhat, he nonetheless judged it all but inevitable that Moscow would cut off gas supplies to Georgia in the winter, and both sides agreed that a Kosovo settlement would provide a further test of Russian intentions. Bryza encouraged the French not to let themselves be intimidated by the Russians and urged them to work with the U.S. to internationalize the frozen conflicts issue, proposing a way forward consisting of confidence-building measures (CBMs) designed to de-isolate the Abkhaz, improve the situation on the ground in Gali, and monitor the Roki tunnel separating North and South Ossetia. Further on the diplomatic front, Bryza proposed using the upcoming OSCE Ministerial and the January Friends meeting to increase pressure on Russia and raise the costs of Russian intransigence. The French appeared largely receptive to U.S. ideas, and spoke in favor of using French-German-Russian consultations and the EU Troika to engage critically with Russia. Both sides agreed that the Russians were feeling tough and comfortable, with Bryza underlining the challenge the international community faces in convincing them that the long-term costs of their intransigence outweigh the short-term benefits. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Visiting EUR DAS Matt Bryza and EUR/CARC Conflicts Advisor John Crosby met October 24 with newly arrived MFA Deputy Political Director Veronique Bugens-Barre and A/S-equivalent for non-EU Europe Jean-Francois Terral to discuss latest developments in Georgia-Russia relations. Terral was joined by DAS-equivalent for the Caucasus and Central Asia Aurelia Bouchez, French Ambassador to Tbilisi Philippe Lefort, French Minsk Group Co-Chair Bernard Fassier and Caucasus desk officer Marie DuMoulin. PolMC and POL Deputy accompanied Bryza and Crosby.

UNOMIG Renewal and U.S.-Russia Discussions

¶3. (C) Terral noted at the outset that Georgian FM Bezhuashvili would be visiting Paris on November 7 and that he wanted to exchange ideas with the U.S. in advance of the

meeting, taking into account the results of the Secretary's recent visit to Moscow. Bryza responded that the subject of Georgia had figured predominantly on the agenda during the Secretary's, A/S Fried's, and his own recent meetings with

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Russian officials. He highlighted in particular paragraph 3 language of the recent UNSC Resolution on the renewal of the UNOMIG mandate -- during the negotiation of which the U.S. had been abandoned by its allies -- and the U.S. concern that the Russians might exploit the resolution as a pretext to encourage Abkhaz aggression -- a concern that was all the more real for the fact that the Abkhaz themselves had approached the U.S. to say that they were coming under intense Russian pressure to initiate action. Moreover, the UNSCR language had to be interpreted against the backdrop of the domestic Russian campaign against resident Georgians and sent a wrong signal.

Need for De-Escalation between Russia and Georgia

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14. (C) Bryza described the U.S. objective of attempting to persuade the Russians to urge restraint with the Abkhaz and South Ossetians while convincing the Georgians that they should do everything in their power to avoid a military confrontation with likely disastrous consequences. The key now was to de-escalate the situation. He judged there was some evidence the Russian MFA was beginning to realize Russia had gone too far domestically in persecuting resident Georgians and that it was time to ratchet down a potentially dangerous dynamic. Militarily, there were signs the Russians were withdrawing troops from the border and reducing their naval patrols. The Russians had made clear, however, that under no circumstances did they intend to lift their economic sanctions against Georgia. Abkhazia's request to join the Russian Federation and the upcoming South Ossetian referendum

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were grounds for additional concern, although it now appeared that the Russians were waiting to see what happens with Kosovo. It was critical to convince the Russians that an outbreak of hostilities could be disastrous for the entire region, including Russia.

15. (C) The U.S., Bryza said, was also working to persuade Georgia to be less provocative, without calling into question its basic right to protect its own territorial integrity. On the positive side of the ledger, Georgian President Saakashvili was now focused on the danger in the current situation and his rhetoric had toned down accordingly: he now said openly that war was not desirable, though clearly the Georgians would have to defend themselves if attacked, while recognizing they would lose. Saakashvili had also told Bryza that now was not the time to continue to insist on the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces. Bryza said there was reason to hope that this Georgian restraint would provide the basis for similar restraint on the Russian side when it came to recognition of Abkhazia and/or South Ossetia. The problem was that this was only a short-term solution; over the longer term, it would be necessary to begin working toward a political settlement. The Russians favored maintaining the status quo, but this must not be allowed to persist indefinitely.

Worries about Kosovo Linkage

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16. (C) Terral agreed that de-escalation was the right word and the right strategy. He stated that France also had initially opposed the Russian-drafted language on Georgian actions in the UNSCR, which Russia had tabled in contravention of the understandings reached with the other Friends of Georgia during meetings in Berlin. Unfortunately, he clarified, the language of the UN report citing Georgia for violations of past agreements had pulled the rug out from under France's feet, and convinced it that accepting the language was the only way to guarantee the extension of the

UNOMIG mandate. Acknowledging that this had caused tensions with the U.S., he argued that the UNSR was still "90 percent" good. The question was what to do next. He was especially concerned about the linkages the Russians were beginning to make between Georgia and Kosovo. A Russian expert had told him that Moscow intended "to ask for the bill" for Kosovo on Georgia, and the Slovak PolDir had heard separately that the bill involved "something on Georgia and NATO." Bugens-Barre added that the Russian PolDir had suggested that Russia "would not forget" French actions on Georgia when it considered next steps on Iran.

#### Dealing with Russia

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17. (C) Bryza, citing an adage about Soviet FM Gromyko, noted FM Lavrov's crowing "victory" following the UNOMIG renewal but said it was nonetheless important not to allow oneself to be intimidated by the Russians. Terral agreed that Russian attempts at horsetrading were not acceptable, but said he also did not want to jeopardize Kosovo (in which he is personally very invested). A calibrated approach was needed, he judged. Bryza countered that the international community had effectively rewarded Russia for dangerous behavior and said it was time to go on the diplomatic offensive. The problem with the resolution was that it was based on the presumption that Georgian actions were unjustified; while it was true that the Georgians may have violated certain agreements, it was important not to forget the broader principle of their right to protect the territorial integrity of Georgia. Noting that the Russians themselves chronically complained about UNOMIG, he suggested using discussions of the next mandate extension to put the onus on the Russians to save UNOMIG. In the meanwhile, it would be important to focus on other ways and means to address the region's security needs.

18. (C) Terral commented that, by any measure, the picture of Russia was darkening. Returning to Bryza's earlier remarks about Russian intentions, he asked whether Russia would cut off gas to Georgia in the winter. Bryza responded that a cut-off was inevitable, adding that the Russians were also threatening to reduce the volume of their trade with Azerbaijan by whatever amount of energy reached Georgia from Azerbaijan through Turkey. He said Georgia was now looking to Iran for gas, but that it would also have to rely on burning fuel oil for electricity. Much of the expensive conversion required to do so had already been accomplished with American assistance. On the diplomatic side, he said it would be incumbent on the Euroatlantic community to respond to any cut-off of gas to Azerbaijan or Turkey. The best way to accomplish that would be to accuse Gazprom, publicly if

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necessary, of being an unreliable partner, as the Russians were very sensitive to such a charge. Terral agreed that this was a potential card to play.

#### De-Isolating Abkhazia

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19. (C) Terral asked for Bryza's judgment as to whether Russia would risk recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Noting that not all Abkhaz were delighted with the Russian embrace, he wondered if this could be used to advantage. Bryza responded that it would be in everyone's interest to devise confidence-building measures (CBMs) to try to de-isolate the Abkhaz and show them they had other options. The U.S., he said, had come close to granting a visa to the Abkhaz "FM" to visit the UN, and might have agreed had Russia not reneged on its commitments on the UNOMIG resolution. But the U.S. would be prepared to move on another, more constructive, occasion. Terral asked about the possibilities for dialogue with the Abkhaz. Bryza responded that there were not only political but also commercial options that could be used; Abkhazia should be opened up to trade with Turkey and through it the EU. Terral asked if this was acceptable to Saakashvili; Bryza affirmed that it was. Lefort commented that the trick would be to hold a

dialogue in a forum not "supervised" by the Russians. Bryza agreed that the FOG format could be useful and suggested that the Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey might also have a role.

#### Moving on Gali

¶10. (C) Terral asked if there were other tracks. Bryza pointed to the economic needs assessment undertaken in South Ossetia and said the UN could undertake similar CBMs in Gali. Noting that the findings of the fact-finding mission of the Friends had differed significantly from those of the UN, he suggested a second Friends' mission. Other possible measures might include the establishment of a human rights office, a small police training operation, and a survey of the needs of IDPs returning to the region. Finally, in discussions of police training and international peacekeeping, it would be important to get the idea across that peacekeeping missions were generally more successful when adjoining countries did not participate directly. Bouchez asked if the GUAM offered a possibility for diversifying the CIS peacekeeping force, with Bryza responding affirmatively. Terral wondered whether this would be acceptable to Russia. Bryza responded that they would probably object, but that it was nonetheless important to try, if only to raise the cost to the Russians of blocking.

#### Turning the Tables

¶11. (C) Terral asked about next steps. Bryza responded that it was time to internationalize Abkhazia and South Ossetia in order to put pressure on Russia, starting with the OSCE Ministerial and then in the January Friends' meeting. Bryza continued that the OSCE Ministerial could be used to push for joint monitoring of the Roki tunnel against smuggling of contraband, establishment of an OSCE observer post at the junction of a road bypassing the Roki tunnel (which Lefort said fell within the geographic zone of the OSCE's area of responsibility), and the creation of economic incentives to channel trade through the tunnel. Terral did not disagree but said his memory of OSCE ministerials was painful. While he found the ideas interesting, he advised caution in raising them with the Russians, perhaps through smaller formats in advance of the Ministerial. He was pessimistic the Russians would respond positively, but it was important to try. Evincing more optimism, Fassier pointed out that the Russians had been intimidating others with the threat of Abkhaz independence since 1994; it was important to point out that this could also backfire against them throughout the region and in Russia itself. Bouchez noted that the upcoming South Ossetian referendum might provide an occasion to make the point.

#### French Interest in Trilateral Format

¶12. (C) Terral noted that bilateral channels would also be important. The U.S. had its own channels with Russia, and France was interested in raising Georgia within the framework of regular trilateral France-Germany-Russia consultations. He welcomed the recent demarche in Moscow by the EU Troika, and speculated that the EU might also be more active in this regard during the German EU presidency the first half of 2007.

#### Short and Long Term

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¶13. (C) Terral was not in a position to offer a detailed readout of the EU informal dinner with Putin at Lahti. Noting only that Putin had been tough and was feeling comfortable, he speculated that the Russians were only looking at the short term. Bryza agreed, citing soaring Russian infrastructure needs that were being left unaddressed. He stressed again the importance of convincing the Russians that the short-term benefits of their continuing intransigence would be outweighed by the long-term costs. Terral agreed, concluding that this was a message that needed

to continue to be passed at the highest levels.

¶14. (U) DAS Bryza did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

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